

**Public Hearing for a Green Building Program**  
Committee on Planning and Economic Development  
Boston City Council - October 6, 2003

By the Boston Climate Action Network

The Boston Climate Action Network would like to thank the Boston City Council, the Committee on Planning and Economic Development, and Councilor John Tobin for the opportunity to make comments today. We are a citizens' group dedicated to reducing Boston's contributions to climate change.

Our planet is warming rapidly, and this is threatening us all with wildly changing weather patterns, like more frequent, more intense storms – such as last winter's President's Day Storm, which set snowfall records up and down the east coast. Boston was inundated with 27.5 inches of snow, the highest total now on record for one storm. The fact that the storm occurred on a holiday spared us all much grief, angst, and lost revenue. That was not the case for the second-highest snowfall of 27.1 inches from the epic Blizzard of '78. The five heaviest snow storms in Boston history have now all occurred since 1969, the ten heaviest all since 1958. (Snowfall records in Boston have been kept since 1892.) If we don't start to act to reduce emissions now, we can look forward to more frequent city-stopping blizzards due to climate disruption.

BCAN wants to highlight some opportunities Boston can take to promote a higher quality of life for all citizens of Boston, now and in the future. Our recommendations will reduce energy usage and hence the carbon dioxide emissions that are warming our planet; they will help save the city money; and they will retain investment in the local economy. This last point is notable, because currently, 75 cents of every dollar spent on energy leaves the local economy.

First, we strongly welcome the implementation of a Green Building Program, to build upon the green building guidelines that have already been gathered - such as the use of both passive and active solar design to reduce the need for energy, and to produce sustainable energy on site. These guidelines should be publicized and codified into building codes as soon as possible.

Second, we would like to acknowledge worthy actions that have already been taken, demonstrating Boston's capacity for implementing sound choices for sustainability.

1. The George Robert White Building at the Boston Nature Center in Mattapan, a green building that was constructed using low environmental impact materials for less than \$200 per square foot. It uses 30% less energy than a comparable building, and generates much of its own electricity.
2. The installation of LED street lights, which reduce energy consumption by 90% and significantly reduce maintenance costs.
3. The Rebuild Boston Energy Initiative, which reduced utility costs for 5,000 homes and 200 commercial low-income units, saving almost 7 million dollars per year.

4. The hiring of an energy management firm to manage the City's energy bills and efficiency program. This program, set to begin soon, will be vital in identifying the most effective steps to implement rapidly, and it will provide a baseline to evaluate progress toward Mayor Menino's goal to reduce municipal energy consumption by 10% by 2005.

We applaud the Mayor's stated goal, and urge you all to support achieving it. However, scientists agree that at least a 70% reduction in present-day emissions will be necessary to stabilize our planet's climate. So, while we acknowledge a positive first step by the city, we want to stress that there is much more work to be done.

BCAN has several other recommendations for further actions by the city:

1. Pass an ordinance, such as Arlington did earlier this year, which requires all new construction and all major renovations to be LEED-certified. This program is mentioned in the green building guidelines that have already been collected.
2. Create an internal incentive for energy conservation within all departments.
3. Focus significant attention on increasing the efficiency of climate control systems, the largest energy consumers in buildings. Investing in energy conservation is more cost effective and reduces energy usage more efficiently than investing in new renewable power generation systems.
4. That being said, we will need to replace some of our fossil fuel energy sources with wind, solar and other non-polluting power supplies. However, these new sources should not come at the expense of increasing energy efficiency and conservation, which is far more cost effective.

Finally, we urge you to create a transparent process that enables citizens to follow and understand the policies and programs that you implement. We encourage you to set clear goals, based on reliable benchmarks, and publicize those goals. Let people know how these programs and policies will improve their health and well-being, so they can celebrate in the city's accomplishments along the way.

We at the Boston Climate Action Network feel the city is making progress on reducing its contributions to global warming. There is no time to rest on past laurels, however, as there is significant work to be done. We stand ready to assist in any capacity that you deem helpful.

Sincerely,

The Boston Climate Action Network